

The mission of SUUSI is to provide a one week experience evoking the best within us, in concert with Unitarian Universalist principles. SUUSI offers the opportunity to share an intergenerational environment of love, personal freedom, ethics, and joy in an intentional, nonjudgmental community.

Executive Summary

SUUSI 2023 was the second year back in person since 2019, and after two years of virtual SUUSI, we are still rebuilding. An unexpected gap in leadership due to family medical needs created additional challenges in the Director role this year; happily, the successorship model which is in place appeared to work well, with both the Director Emerita and the (planned) Assistant Director for this year being able to step up.

SUUSI continues to seek a new equilibrium between our expansive program of years past, which were supported by an attendee pool of around 1100, and the realities of a SUUSI with attendance just over half that. New morning worship locations (Hillside Grind followed by the Bardo atrium lobby) broke new ground. Fewer participants meant a consolidated housing experience, with more “togetherness” as a result. Expansion into the new Water Rock dorm provided a separate yet central, non-isolated location for Young Adults (YAs) and Medians.

Some high points:

- Our attendees remain aware of – and appreciative of – the incredible amount of work, improvisation, and sheer determination that it took to pull SUUSI off this year. Again and again they commented about their deep gratitude for the Core Staff and Board and the work that we do. Complaints were tempered by appreciation of the effort and resources dedicated to a smoothly running experience.
- SUUSI is deeply loved, especially by repeat attendees. SUUSI holds a central place in people’s hearts. People are eager to do what they can to help SUUSI, and have a hard time imagining their lives without it.
- Survey respondents mostly feel welcomed, loved, and accepted at SUUSI. Deep friendships form at SUUSI, even when contact outside SUUSI week is rare. Many of us feel that we are free to express our truest selves at SUUSI in a way that can be difficult in other settings of our lives.
- People feel challenged to be their best selves at SUUSI. Many attendees welcome SUUSI as a time for personal growth and inspiration for the rest of the year, not just fun.
- SUUSI offers a program rich in both depth and breadth (albeit a slimmer menu than in years past). People are sometimes overwhelmed by the opportunities. SUUSI creates joyful and satisfying ways to fill our time, along with hard choices.
- Our LGB participants and their children report experiencing SUUSI as an extremely welcoming place. Many of them report strong feelings of gratitude for the acceptance and inclusion they experience at SUUSI.
- WCU campus (except for the beds) is a highlight for many. The efforts of WCU to respond to our dining and other needs have not gone unnoticed.

Of course, we still have work to do.

- Newcomers to SUUSI continue to be overwhelmed by the experience. Not everyone takes advantage of the outreach beforehand and then some are unnecessarily surprised.
- Newcomers also report an experience of being superficially welcomed but not fully invited in.
- Communication at SUUSI continues to be refined. The impossible goal of reaching everyone with exactly the right information in the right channel at the right time remains an aspiration.
- Accommodating mobility and accessibility special needs remains an area of growth.
- Covid protocols remain an area of tension.
- Room and board, while adequate for many, remain the least satisfying areas for many more. Standard dorm room beds continue to challenge an aging attendee population. Expectations for food have been managed to some extent, but we still need to explore creative ways to help people meet nutritional needs and to rehabilitate the social dimensions of meals.
- Teen housing in close proximity to other groups engenders conflict on noise levels and appropriate quiet hours.
- Keeping up with information now presupposes access to email and texting while at SUUSI. While this is true for most participants, a sizable group have difficulty accessing electronic communication, and don't know the alternatives available.
- Crafting "the perfect SUUSI" experience remains an art and not a science. With very diverse expectations and goals, no one template provides the best way to SUUSI. Helping participants choose their own adventure will increase participants' satisfaction and the vitality of the SUUSI community. We may want pre-SUUSI webinars for Q&A and to provide additional guidance in yet another manner.
- SUUSI continues to wrestle with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. These concerns are more front-and-center, but the work remains challenging and needs broad-based buy-in and participation.
- Differing perspectives on issues such as the balance between teen independence and appropriate supervision, transparency in SUUSI decision-making and communication, and whether SUUSI is a fun camp or an intentional spiritual community (or both, and in what proportions) need to find healthy and robust resolutions that are at least understood if not subscribed to by all.

What's new

Most of these bullet points above were carried forward from the prior year's report with only slight adjustments – returning SUUSI participants' experiences are fairly stable. Notable "new" notes voiced include:

- Specific discontent around particular staff/personnel conflicts
- Tension between tradition and innovation in worship services
- Concerns about future viability of SUUSI (finances, critical mass/size, precariousness of relationship with WCU, concerns about attendee pipeline particularly for families).